



COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM GAINS TRACTION FOR FIRST TIME IN YEARS

Since President Obama's reelection both sides of the political aisle have expressed support for comprehensive immigration reform. While comprehensive immigration reform proposals have failed in the past, bi-partisan support and political momentum suggest that reform could become a reality as early as this year. A bi-partisan group of Senators and the President have each released plans in the past week. While their proposals differ in some key details, both plans emphasize the broad concepts of securing our borders, improving the system for employment verification, offering permanent residency to graduates in certain disciplines, and providing an earned pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Comparison of Plans

Announced January 28th, the [Senators' plan](#) addresses four basic legislative objectives: a pathway to citizenship; the reduction of immigration backlogs and retention of "STEM" graduates from U.S. universities; stricter employment verification requirements; and market-based accommodation of the demand for lower-skilled labor.

On January 29, 2013, President Obama outlined the principles he believes should be contained in a comprehensive immigration reform bill. The [President's proposal](#) addresses four primary areas: border security; increasing penalties for hiring undocumented workers; a pathway to citizenship; and a more streamlined legal immigration system.

The Senators' and the President's plans follow some of the same basic principles, such as a commitment to border security, stricter workplace enforcement provisions, and an earned pathway to citizenship for the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States. With regard to the pathway to citizenship, both plans would require the applicant to meet certain eligibility criteria, such as registering and paying taxes in order to attain probationary legal status. Under both plans, the ability to seek probationary legal status would take effect immediately upon passage of the law.

The key difference in the Senators' and President's proposals for an earned pathway to citizenship lies in the conditions for final approval for U.S. lawful permanent residency under each plan. The Senators' plan would condition approval for lawful permanent residency upon external factors beyond the individual applicant's control, such as securing the border and combatting visa overstays. The President's plan would not place such conditions on a final

award of permanent residency. So long as the individual meets all of his or her personal obligations under the plan, he or she would be eligible for permanent residency, and thereafter citizenship. By not imposing external conditions, the President hopes to place a real, tangible pathway to citizenship within the individual's reach.

Contact Congress

While some have expressed doubts as to whether Congress and the President will be able to agree and pass comprehensive immigration reform, the President is optimistic that a sensible plan could pass by the end of the year, or possibly by early summer, so long as bipartisan negotiations proceed well. For their part, the Senators aim to incorporate their proposal in legislation to be introduced in March of this year, while the President has indicated that he will produce his own bill if Congress does not act within a reasonable period of time.

To express support for sensible, comprehensive immigration reform that addresses the needs of both businesses and families, [contact Congress now](#). Once you have entered your zip code into the legislative advocacy tool, you will be prompted to contact your Senators and Representative using either a prepared draft email available in the program, or by entering your own custom text for submission.

As always, FosterQuan will continue to monitor developments on comprehensive immigration reform and will make future updates available via our Immigration Update© bulletins and on our website at www.fosterquan.com.